

CHARLES SPURGEON AND THE BATTLE FOR TRUTH

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The following was first published in *O Timothy* magazine, Volume 8, Issue 1, 1991:

What is neo-evangelicalism? Though many definitions have been given for neo-evangelicalism--both by its proponents and by its enemies--I believe the root problem is a lack of zeal for the truth. I know its proponents will not agree with this, but I am convinced this is right on target.

Think about it. Knowledge of the truth is one thing; belief of the truth is one thing. But Holy Spirit-wrought zeal for the truth is quite another. Is the Holy Spirit zealous for the truth? Consider that one of His names is the "Spirit of truth" (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

When the Apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit, he rebuked heresy and cried out against heretics! "Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:9-10). This is strong stuff, and I believe the Holy Spirit will always produce this type of reaction against heresy when He has His way.

The Psalmist had a zeal for the truth, and this manifest in a hatred for error: "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:128).

Think about it. If a man has zeal for the truth he will not fellowship with error. If a man has zeal for the truth he will not buddy up to Roman Catholic priests; he will not be cozy with modernists; he will not speak well of the Pope. Rather he will lift up his voice against every form of blasphemy and error--AND AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE PROMOTING THE ERROR.

Yes, I believe the root problem with neo-evangelicalism is its lack of zeal for truth. Old Spurgeon was NOT a neo-evangelical!

The hour in which we live is one of deep apostasy. It takes the form of Modernism, Romanism, Pentecostalism, Ecumenism, and all sorts of Cults. We have the JW's, the Mormons, the Adventists. We also have a multitude of those who are Bible believers, but who are in fellowship with apostasy.

Charles Spurgeon faced a similar situation. In his day, the denominations were beginning to be infiltrated with modernism. They were eaten up with lukewarmness. Spurgeon's own group, the Baptist Union of England, faced this problem. The Church of England was being infiltrated with Romanism, led by men such as John Newman and E.B. Pusey. As always, many of the preachers and Christian leaders of that hour refused to deal with error, excusing it and remaining in fellowship with it.

Though Spurgeon was a great defender of the faith during his entire ministry, it can also be said that his battles can be grouped into three distinct periods.

The first was his battle against the lukewarm Christianity which was prominent in England as he began his ministry in London. During this period, he also lifted his voice on one hand against the hyper-Calvinism which destroyed the universal proclamation of the Gospel, and against Arminianism which denied the eternal grace of God and the security of the believer. During those days, Spurgeon was ostracized, ridiculed, and bitterly opposed. This was during the 1850s.

The second period of confrontation was his battle in the 1860s against baptismal regeneration and the Romanizing influence in the Anglican church. During this period, Spurgeon enjoyed great popularity and many joined hands with him in the battle.

The third great battle raged in the 1880s and early 1890s as Spurgeon lifted his voice against the modernism and compromise within his own Baptist Union. After a brief battle from within, Spurgeon left the Baptist Union and remained separate and independent until his death. He believed and taught that this was the only proper biblical position toward entrenched error. During his final years, Spurgeon was again ostracized and bitterly opposed because of his stand for Bible separation.

Whenever I have read of Spurgeon's battles and of his resolute stand for truth, my heart has been greatly challenged. In the following I want to share some of Spurgeon's statements during these battles for the edification of our readers. We will also look at the price Spurgeon paid for his stand for truth. For many of the following quotations I am indebted to G. Archer Weniger, Iain Murray (*The Forgotten Spurgeon*), and R.J. Sheehan (*C.H. Spurgeon and the Modern Church*).

The old warrior went to heaven in 1892, tired, frail, but faithful to the end for the Truth.

GOD, GIVE US WATCHDOGS!

"It is impossible but that the Church of Rome must spread, when we who are the watchdogs of the fold are silent, and others are gently and smoothly turfing the road, and making it as soft and smooth as possible, that converts may travel down to the nethermost hell of Popery. We want John Knox back again. Do not talk to me of mild and gentle

men, of soft manners and squeamish words, we want the fiery Knox, and even though his vehemence should ‘ding our pulpits into blads,’ it were well if he did but rouse our hearts to action.” --C.H.S. Sermons, 10, 322-3 (Murray)

STAND, EVEN ALONE

“Long ago I ceased to count heads. Truth is usually in the minority in this evil world. I have faith in the Lord Jesus for myself, a faith burned into me as with a hot iron. I thank God, what I believe I shall believe, even if I believe it alone.” --C.H.S., October 16, 1887, Sermons 33, 575 (Weniger)

DECISION FOR TRUTH CALLS FOR PROTEST AGAINST ERROR

“Neither when we have chosen our way can we keep company with those who go the other way. There must come with decision for truth a corresponding protest against error.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, September 1887, p. 465 (Sheehan)

DECISION IS THE VIRTUE OF THE HOUR

“A chasm is opening between men who believe their Bibles and the men who are prepared for an advance upon Scripture. The house is being robbed, its very walls are being digged down, but the good people who are in bed are too fond of the warmth, and too much afraid of getting broken heads, to go downstairs and meet the burglars ... Inspiration and speculation cannot abide in peace. Compromise there can be none. We cannot hold the inspiration of the Word, and yet reject it; we cannot hold the doctrine of the fall and yet talk of the evolution of spiritual life from human nature; we cannot recognize the punishment of the impenitent and yet indulge the ‘larger hope.’ One way or the other we must go. Decision is the virtue of the hour.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and the Trowel*, September 1887, pgs. 464-5 (Sheehan)

WE’VE RECEIVED THE TRUTH FROM MARTYRS HANDS; SHALL WE NOT DEFEND IT?

“We admire a man who was firm in the faith, say four hundred years ago ... but such a man today is a nuisance, and must be put down. Call him a narrow-minded bigot, or give him a worse name if you can think of one. Yet imagine that in those ages past, Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and their compeers had said, ‘The world is out of order; but if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row, and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps, and sleep over the bad times, and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better.’ Such conduct on their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the truth and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. ...

“It is today as it was in the Reformers’ days. Decision is needed. Here is the day for the man, where is the man for the day? We who have had the gospel passed to us by martyr hands dare not trifle with it, nor sit by and hear it denied by traitors, who pretend to love it, but inwardly abhor every line of it. ... Look you, sirs, there are ages yet to come. If the Lord does not speedily appear, there will come another generation, and another, and all these generations will be tainted and injured if we are not faithful to God and to His truth today. We have come to a turning-point in the road. If we turn to the right, mayhap our children and our children’s children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to His Word.” --C.H.S., *Sermons*, 1888, 83-84 (Murray)

UNITY WITH ERROR IS TREASON

“What action is to be taken we leave to those who can see more plainly than we do what Israel ought to do. One thing is clear to us: we cannot be expected to meet in any Union which comprehends those whose teaching is on fundamental points exactly the reverse of that which we hold dear. ... To us it appears that there are many things upon which to compromise is possible, but there are others in which it would be an act of treason to pretend to fellowship.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, October 1887, p. 515 (Sheehan)

“To pursue union at the expense of truth is treason to the Lord Jesus.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, October 1887, p. 558 (Sheehan)

“As to yourselves, I would recommend entire separation from those who would be likely to injure your spiritual life. I would no more associate with a man who denied the faith than with a drunkard or a thief. I would guard my spirituals as jealously as my morals. A loyal man is not at home in the company of traitors. There are associations with the ungodly into which we must needs go, unless we get out of the world altogether; but there are others which are optional, and here we should dare to be scrupulous. A godly minister once said of a certain preacher, ‘I would not permit such a man to enter my pulpit. I am as jealous of my pulpit as of my bed.’ I do not think he was too rigid. We should guard ourselves against compromising the truth of God by association with those who do not hold it, especially at such a time as this.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, July 1888, p. 343 (Sheehan)

WE MUST NOT BECOME ACCOMPLICES WITH THOSE WHO PREACH ANOTHER GOSPEL

“Those gentlemen [false teachers] have full liberty to think as they like; but, on the other hand, those who love the old gospel have equally the liberty to disassociate themselves from them, and that liberty also involves a responsibility from which there is no escaping. If we do not believe in universalism, or in Purgatory, and if we do believe in the

inspiration of Scripture, the Fall, and the great sacrifice of Christ for sin, it behooves us to see that we do not become accomplices with those who teach another gospel, and as it would seem from one writer, have avowedly another God.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, October 1887, p. 513 (Sheehan)

TRUTH MORE IMPORTANT THAN UNITY

“Constantly we hear of proposals for union, and truly these are welcome where mere technical matters divide true Christians; but what is the use of pretending to create union where there can be none? There is another matter which needs to be thought of as well as union, and that is TRUTH. To part with truth to show charity is to betray our Lord with a kiss. Between those who believe in the eternal verities and those who constantly cast doubt on them there can be no union. One cried of old, ‘Is it peace?’ And the answer was a sharp and true one. We render it thus--’What hast thou to do with peace while departures from the truth of God are so many?’ The first question is--Are we one in Christ? and are we obedient to the truth revealed in the Scriptures? If so, union will necessarily follow: but if not, it is vain to clamour for a confederacy which would only be an agreement to aid and abet each other’s errors.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, February 1887, p. 91 (Sheehan)

MODERNISTS ARE NOT TRUE CHRISTIANS

“If thou receive not His perfect, unrivalled, Godlike blood-washing, thou art no Christian. Whatever be thy profession, whatever thy supposed experience, whatever thy reformation, whatever thou mayest have attempted or accomplished, if thou hast never come as a guilty one, and seen thy sin laid upon the bleeding Son of God, thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. ... Without faith in the atonement thou canst have no part in Christ. ... Jesus Christ will be either acknowledged the anointed Saviour, or He will be nothing to you. If you will not take Him to be an expiation for your sins ... you refuse Him altogether.” --C.H.S., *Sermons*, 16, 220 & 223 (Murray)

“An unregenerate heart lies at the bottom of ‘modern thought’.” --C.H.S., *An All-Round Ministry*, p. 375

“But how are we to act towards those who deny his vicarious sacrifice and ridicule the great truth of justification by his righteousness? These are not mistaken friends, but enemies of the cross of Christ.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, November 1887, p. 559 (Sheehan)

ON MODERNISTS, THEIR DUPLICITY, AND THOSE WHO “PUFF THEIR BOOKS”

“We have lived to see a certain sort of men ... who seek to teach, nowadays, that God is a universal Father, and that our ideas of His dealing with the impenitent as a Judge, and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error. Sin, according to these men, is a disorder rather than an offence, an error rather than a crime. Love is the only attribute they can discern, and the full-orbed Deity they have not known. Some of these men push their way very far into the bogs and mire of falsehood, until they inform us that eternal punishment is ridiculed as a dream. In fact, books now appear which teach us that there is no such thing as the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. They use the word atonement, it is true: but, in regard to its meaning they have removed the ancient landmark. They acknowledge that the Father has shown His great love to poor sinful man by sending His Son, but not that God was inflexibly just in the exhibition of His mercy, nor that he punished Christ on behalf of His people, nor that, indeed, God ever will punish anybody in His wrath, or that there is such a thing as justice apart from discipline. Even sin and hell are but old words employed henceforth in a new and altered sense ... These are the new men whom God has sent down from Heaven to tell us that the apostle Paul was all wrong, that our faith is vain, that we have been quite mistaken, and that there was no need for propitiating blood to wash away our sins: that the fact was, our sins needed discipline, but penal vengeance and righteous wrath are quite out of the question! When I thus speak, I am free to confess that such ideas are not boldly taught by a certain individual whose volume excites these remarks, but as he puffs the books of gross perverters of the truth, I am compelled to believe that he endorses such theology.” -- C.H.S., *The Early Years*, p. 488

“These destroyers of our churches appear to be as content with their work as monkeys with their mischief. That which our fathers would have lamented they rejoice in: the alienation they accept as a compliment and the grief of the spiritually minded they regard as an evidence of their power.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, August 1887, pgs. 399-400 (Sheehan)

“Avowed atheists are not a tenth as dangerous as those preachers who scatter doubt and stab at faith.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, August 1887, p. 399 (Sheehan)

LAXITY IN DOCTRINE THE PARENT OF WORLDLINESS

“It is clear to everyone who is willing to see it that laxity of doctrine is either the parent of worldliness, or is in some other way very near akin to it. The men who give up the old faith are the same persons who plead for latitude as to general conduct.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, December 1887, p. 606 (Sheehan)

SEPARATION IS NOT CONTRARY TO CHARITY

“The barefaced manner in which certain persons assert that to separate from men who hold vital errors is contrary to the mind of Christ would be amusing if it were not

saddening. They write as if such a Book as the New Testament were not in existence: they evidently decide what the mind of Christ ought to be without referring to such poor creatures as the Apostles. As for us we think more of Paul and John than of the whole Body of modern thinkers. What saith the Scriptures? 'If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds' (2 Jn. 10-11). 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed' (Gal. 1:8-9).

"The spirit of Scripture is one, and therefore we may be sure that decision for truth and separation from the erring are in full consistency with the charity of 1 Corinthians 13, to which we are so continually pointed. It is true charity to those who err to refuse to aid and abet them in their errors. 'Charity' sounds very prettily in the mouths of those who wish to screen themselves, but, if they had exercised it in the past, they might not have driven us out from among the people to whom we naturally belong." --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, December 1887, p. 642 (Sheehan)

FELLOWSHIP WITH ERROR IS PARTICIPATION IN SIN

"Believers in Christ's atonement are now in declared union with those who make light of it; believers in Holy Scripture are in confederacy with those who deny plenary inspiration; those who hold evangelical doctrine are in open alliance with those who call the fall a fable, who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, who call justification by faith immoral, and hold that there is another probation after death ... Yes, we have before us the wretched spectacle of professedly orthodox Christians publicly avowing their union with those who deny the faith, and scarcely concealing their contempt for those who cannot be guilty of such gross disloyalty to Christ. To be very plain, we are unable to call these things Christian Unions, they begin to look like Confederacies in Evil. ... It is our solemn conviction that where there can be no real spiritual communion there should be no pretense of fellowship. Fellowship with known and vital error is participation in sin." --C.H.S., *The Sword and the Trowel*, November 1887, p. 558 (Sheehan)

LOYALTY TO CHRIST MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY RESPECT TO HIS WORDS

"It is a great grief to me that hitherto many of our most honoured friends in the Baptist Union have, with strong determination, closed their eyes to serious divergences from the truth. I doubt not that their motive has been in a measurable laudable, for they desired to preserve peace, and hoped that errors, which they were forced to see, would be removed as their friends advance in years and knowledge. But at least even these will, I trust, discover that the new views are not the old truth in better dress, but deadly errors with

which we can have no fellowship. I regard full-grown 'modern thought' as a totally new cult, having no more relation to Christianity than the mist of the evening to the everlasting hills."

"Let us see to it that we set forth our Lord Jesus Christ as the infallible Teacher, through His inspired Word. I do not understand that loyalty to Christ which is accompanied by indifference to His words. How can we reverence His person, if His own words and those of His apostles are treated with disrespect? Unless we receive Christ's words, we cannot receive Christ; for John said, 'He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error'." --C.H.S., *An All-Round Ministry*, p. 373 (Weniger)

HOUSE WITHOUT FOUNDATIONS CANNOT BE REPAIRED

"The day will come when those who think they can repair a house which has no foundations will see the wisdom in quitting it altogether. All along we have said that to come out from association with questionable doctrines is the only possible solution of a difficulty which, however it may be denied, is not to be trifled with by those who are conscious of its terrible reality." --C.H.S., July 1889, *The Sword and the Trowel* (Weniger)

SEPARATION IS NOT SCHISM

"Separation from such as connive at fundamental error, or withhold the 'Bread of life' from perishing souls, is not schism, but only what truth, and conscience, and God require of all who would be found faithful." --C.H.S., *The Sword and the Trowel*, 1888, 127 (Weniger)

UNITY WITH HERESY IS SCHISM

"For Christians to be linked in association with ministers who do not preach the gospel of Christ is to incur moral guilt. A Union which can continue irrespective of whether its member churches belong to a common faith is not fulfilling any scriptural function. The preservation of a denominational association when it is powerless to discipline heretics cannot be justified on the grounds of the preservation of 'Christian unity.' ... It is error which breaks the unity of churches, and to remain in a denominational alignment which condones error is to support schism." --C.H.S. *The Forgotten Spurgeon*, Murray, pgs. 164-165

NEVER DO A LITTLE WRONG TO OBTAIN THE GREATEST GOOD

Preaching from Daniel chapter 6, in 1868, and referring to the probable temptation which came to Daniel in the form of a suggestion that he would be of more assistance to true

religion if he adopted a prudent policy and stayed alive in Darius's Court, Spurgeon declared: "That argument I have heard hundreds of times when people have been urged to come out of false positions and do the right. But what have you and I to do with maintaining our influence and position at the expense of truth? It is never to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good ... Your duty is to do the right: consequences are with God." --C.H.S., 1868, Sermon at Metropolitan Tabernacle (Murray)

GUARD THE FAITH, NOT YOUR POSITION

"Failure at a crucial moment may mar the entire outcome of a life. A man who has enjoyed special light is made bold to follow in the way of the Lord, and is anointed to guide others therein. He rises into a place of love and esteem among the godly, and promotes his advancement among men. What then? The temptation comes to be careful of the position he has gained, and to do nothing to endanger it. The man, so lately a faithful man of God, compromises with worldlings, and to quiet his own conscience invents a theory by which such compromises are justified, even commended. He receives the praises of the judicious; he has, in truth, gone over to the enemy. The whole force of his former life now tells upon the wrong side. ... To avoid such an end it becomes us ever to stand fast." --C.H.S., 1888, *Sword and the Trowel* (Murray)

THREE GROUPS OF CHRISTIANS: FALSE TEACHERS, SEPARATISTS, AND COMPROMISERS WHO ARE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH ERROR

In an article entitled "Attempts at the Impossible" in the December edition of *The Sword and Trowel*, C.H. Spurgeon said, "There are now two parties in the religious world, and a great mixed multitude who from various causes decline to be ranked with either of them." The two parties were, of course, the unorthodox and the separated evangelicals. The mixed multitude were those in alliance with the unorthodox. Of them, C.H. Spurgeon wrote: "In this army of intermediates are many who have no right to be there; but we spare them. The day will, however, come when they will have to reckon with their own consciences. When the light is taken out of its place they may have to mourn that they were not willing to trim the lamp, nor even to notice that the flame grew dim." --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, December 1888, p. 619 (Sheehan)

OBJECTION TO A CREED IS A DECEPTION

"The objection to a creed is a very pleasant way of concealing objection to discipline, and a desire for latitudinarianism. What is wished for is a Union which will, like Noah's ark, afford shelter both for the clean and for the unclean." --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, February 1888, p. 82 (Sheehan)

NO PROTEST EQUAL TO SEPARATION

“As soon as I saw, or thought I saw, that error had become firmly established. I did not deliberate, but quitted the body at once. Since then my counsel has been ‘Come out from among them.’ I have felt that no protest could be equal to that of separation.” --C.H.S., *Sword and the Trowel* (Weniger)

NO NEED FOR ORGANIZED ASSOCIATIONS; THE LOCAL CHURCH IS SUFFICIENT

To the suggestion that he should start a new denomination, he replied negatively. He argued that there were enough denominations, that organizations tended to be infiltrated and corrupt, and that self governing, self determining churches could fellowship without “hampering ropes” and “can keep their own coasts clear of invaders.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, November 1887, p. 560 (Sheehan)

DO RIGHT THOUGH THE HEAVENS FALL!

“Ah, my dear brethren! there are many that are deceived by this method of reasoning. They remain where their conscience tells them they ought not to be, because, they say, they are more useful than they would be if they went ‘without the camp.’ This is doing evil that good may come, and can never be tolerated by an enlightened conscience. If an act of sin would increase my usefulness tenfold, I have no right to do it; and if an act of righteousness would appear likely to destroy all my apparent usefulness, I am yet to do it. It is yours and mine to do the right though the heavens fall, and follow the command of Christ whatever the consequences may be. ‘That is strong meat,’ do you say? Be strong men, then, and feed thereon ... For right is right, since God is God, And right the day must win; To doubt would be disloyalty, To falter would be sin.” --C.H.S., *Sermons*, 37, p. 426 (Murray)

TRUTH MIGHT LOSE OUT IN THIS WORLD, BUT WILL TRIUMPH ULTIMATELY

“If for a while the evangelicals are doomed to go down, let them die fighting, and in the full assurance that their gospel will have a resurrection when the inventions of ‘modern thought’ shall be burned up with fire unquenchable.” --C.H.S., *The Sword and Trowel*, August 1887, p. 400 (Sheehan)

“I am a disciple of the old-fashioned doctrine as much when it is covered with obloquy and rebuke as when it shall again display its power, as it surely shall. Skeptics may seem to take the truth, and bind it, and scourge it, and crucify it, and say that it is dead; and they may endeavour to bury it in scorn, but the Lord has many a Joseph and a Nicodemus who will see that all due honour is done even to the body of truth, and will wrap the despised creed in sweet spices, and hide it away in their hearts. They may, perhaps, be half afraid that it is really dead, as the wise men assert; yet it is precious to their souls,

and they will come forth right gladly to espouse its cause, and to confess that they are its disciples. We will sit down in sorrow, but not in despair; and watch until the stone is rolled away, and Christ in His truth shall live again, and be openly triumphant.” --C.H.S., Sermon at the Tabernacle, 1878, *The Full Harvest*, p. 468

THE PRICE TO BE PAID FOR ZEAL FOR THE TRUTH

We have seen Spurgeon’s zeal for truth, but we have not seen the results of his battles. Spurgeon paid a price for his zeal for the truth. The inner struggles and pain of the controversies with the Baptist Union were probably the cause of his untimely death in 1892 at fifty-seven years of age. He died only a little over four years after the “Downgrade Controversy” began. Spurgeon himself thought this was the cause of his rapid physical decline, and his wife and close associates did, as well. Though we cannot know the full details of his own heart’s trouble during these struggles, we do know something of the price he paid. We want to highlight three of these:

First, Spurgeon paid the price of being lied about and censored by his own brethren.

Before his departure from the Baptist Union, Spurgeon had communicated privately with the leaders of the Union about the heresies held by some of the members. He discussed these heresies in detail. In fact, Dr. S.H. Booth, Secretary of the Baptist Union, had corresponded with Spurgeon and requested Spurgeon’s help in the battle against heresy.

“The exact date at which the Secretary of the Baptist Union, Dr. S.H. Booth, wrote to C.H. Spurgeon is not known, but about this time [May 1887] letters were sent. In them Dr. Booth expressed his concern at the public statements of some of the Baptist Union Council and at the tendency of the teaching of the Baptist Colleges. Knowing that there was no machinery existing in the Baptist Union to deal with such heresy, HE ASKED C.H. SPURGEON TO ACT AND SUPPLIED HIM WITH THE NAMES OF OFFENDERS AND THE SPEECHES WHICH CAUSED OFFENCE.” (Sheehan, pgs. 25-26)

The duplicity of Booth and other leaders of the Baptist Union is amazing. The same men who encouraged Spurgeon to enter the fray for truth and “supplied him with the names of offenders and the speeches which caused offence” later denied such communication. In fact, after Spurgeon departed from the Union, these men led in the effort to censor Spurgeon because they claimed he refused to give any specifics regarding heresy in the Union! What duplicity and wickedness! In private and when there was no price to pay, these compromisers claimed they were concerned for the truth. But when the feathers began to fly and the pressure was put to bear upon them, they caved under like the cowards they were.

“After the December issue of *The Sword and Trowel* had been published, eighty of the hundred members of the Baptist Union Council met on 13th December to discuss the crisis created by C.H. Spurgeon’s resignation. ... The officers of the Union, and especially Dr. Booth, denied having received any formal charges from C.H. Spurgeon which should have been brought to the Council but suggested that a scriptural procedure (!) would be to interview C.H. Spurgeon in line with our Lord’s teaching in Matthew 18:15 and to travel to Mentone in the South of France [where Spurgeon was recuperating from illness] if necessary to do this.

“When C.H. Spurgeon was informed by telegram from Dr. Booth that in accordance with Matthew 18:15 a deputation of four theological doctors was coming to see him, he put them off until his return to England in January. He was very suspicious about the purpose of the meeting. He felt that far from being an attempt to bring about peace and harmony, they in fact were trying to present him as awkward or as he put it ‘to fix on me the odium of being implacable.’

“He recognized also the deceitfulness of Dr. Booth and others in coming to see him according to Matthew 18:15 to hear his grievance as if they had never heard it before. To his wife he wrote, ‘For Dr. Booth to say I never complained is amazing,’ and, ‘What a farce about my seeing these brethren, privately, accordingly to Matthew 18:15. Why, I saw the Secretary and President again and again; and then I printed my plaint and only left the Union when nothing could be done.’

“C.H. Spurgeon had the proof he needed to reveal the double-dealing of Dr. Booth. He had the letters Dr. Booth had written to him which included the names of those Dr. Booth accused of unorthodoxy and the unorthodox sections of their sermons he had sent to C.H. Spurgeon with a request for action. He also had copies of his own letters in reply.

“C.H. Spurgeon wrote to Dr. Booth stating his intention to hand over these letters. Dr. Booth replied that such action was improper as the correspondence was private. C.H. Spurgeon-- ever the Christian gentlemen--agreed not to make the letters public. It was chivalrous but his biggest mistake. Without the publication of the letters the accusation that he had never made formal protests to the Union could be upheld. Courtesy and respect for confidentiality undermined his credibility in the discussions that followed. That Dr. Booth should have tied C.H. Spurgeon’s hands by appealing to confidentiality means ‘that the responsibility for the subsequent unfortunate proceedings rests squarely with Booth.’ ...

“On his return from the South of France to England ... on the 13th January, Drs. Culross, Clifford [who himself denied the inerrancy of Scripture] and Booth met with C.H. Spurgeon at the Tabernacle to ‘follow through Matthew 18:15’ and entered into difficult discussions. C.H. Spurgeon made a last attempt to get the Council to adopt a clear

evangelical basis of faith similar to that of the Evangelical Alliance so that the unorthodox would have to depart. But all ideas of a credal statement were rejected.

“When he was pressed to name the unorthodox ministers and present his evidence he refused because Dr. Booth would not permit his letters to be divulged and without a credal basis for the Union no-one could be excluded anyway!

“Within a few days the Baptist Union Council met and passed a resolution accepting C.H. Spurgeon’s resignation. But it did not stop there. It also passed a second resolution which read: ‘That the Council recognizes the gravity of the charges which Mr. Spurgeon has brought against the Union previous to and since his withdrawal. It considers that the public and general manner in which they have been made reflects on the whole body and exposes to suspicion brethren who love the truth as dearly as he does. And, as Mr. Spurgeon declined to give the names of those to whom he intended them to apply, and the evidence supporting them, those charges in the judgment of the Council ought not to have been made.’” (Sheehan, pgs. 52- 58)

The Dr. Booths, and Dr. Cliffords, and Dr. Culrosses are still with us, only there are far more of them today as in Spurgeon’s day. And those who stand for truth and refuse to compromise will find that such men are their greatest enemies. Compromisers despise separatists. Spurgeon was lied about, slandered, and censored. Any unbending separatist will receive the same medicine.

Second, Spurgeon paid the price of losing friends.

After his departure in 1887 from the Baptist Union, Spurgeon “continued to preach and to write about the ‘Downgrade,’ but he did so as a man with few real supporters. He did not add much to the principles he had set out throughout the controversy in his later writings. He simply amassed more and more evidence of defection from the truth of scripture and became increasingly isolated because few would stand with him, and soon he died; in part this was because of the immense pressures of standing against the prevailing tide of unorthodoxy” (Sheehan, p.77).

Those who stand boldly and uncompromisingly for the truth will often be rather lonely. In this the disciple follows in his Master’s footsteps. Christ enjoyed a brief period of popularity, but when he preached things the people found to be “hard sayings”, his popularity disappeared. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Jn. 6:66). The Apostle Paul also knew the pain of loneliness in his battle for truth. “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” ... “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge “ (2 Tim. 1:15; 4:16).

The battle for truth can be very lonely. Praise the Lord that often there ARE those who are willing to stand with us when we battle for truth; oftentimes we are not utterly alone. But compromisers will always outnumber the faithful in this present world.

Third, Spurgeon paid the price of losing financial support.

One of the hardest tests is that of the pocketbook. Multitudes of men have drawn back from the battle for truth because they knew they might lose financial support and security as a result. I once talked with a denominational pastor about the liberalism in his denomination and asked him why he didn't withdraw and separate from error. He was honest in his answer. He replied that the denomination had been good to him and to his family, had educated him, had a retirement plan for him. How could he separate?!

Spurgeon was cut of a different cloth than this. When he made his stand against heresy in the Baptist Union and withdrew himself from it, he lost considerable financial support and his ministries began to suffer. Yet the old warrior did not flinch. His faith was in his Lord, not in man, and God did not fail him. In the following quote from a letter to his co-pastor and deacons, Spurgeon mentions the problem with finances and we see his position in that regard:

“We may, perhaps, be made to feel some of the brunt of the battle in our various funds; but the Lord liveth. My eminent predecessor, Dr. Gill, was told, by a certain member of his congregation who ought to have known better, that, if he published his book, *The Cause of God and Truth*, he would lose some of his best friends, and that his income would fall off. The doctor said, ‘I can afford to be poor, but I cannot afford to injure my conscience;’ and he has left his mantle as well as his chair in our vestry.” --C.H.S., Nov. 27, 1887, *The Full Harvest*, p. 477

The following is another event from that period. When one of Spurgeon's greatest supporters cut off funding because of Spurgeon's stand, the need was met in a most wonderful manner. The Lord's miraculous provision from an unknown and unsolicited source stands as a testimony of His faithfulness toward those stand for Him. Mrs. Spurgeon tells us of this delightful incident:

“During that visit to Mentone [soon after his resignation from the Baptist Union Spurgeon traveled to Mentone, France, because of illness], an incident occurred, to which my husband often gratefully referred as a remarkable token of the Lord's approval of his protest against false doctrine and worldliness. Before I give extracts from his letters concerning it, a brief explanation is necessary. For many years before this eventful period of my husband's life, he had been most generously aided in all his beneficent plans and purposes by a friend to whom God had given abundance of this world's wealth. These supplies came with loving freeness, and invariable regularity; and more than a mere hint was given that they might be depended on while the donor had it in his power to be thus

royally open-handed. However, Mr. Spurgeon's attitude in the "Down-grade" Controversy alienated the heart of this friend, and caused him to withdraw altogether the splendid help which had, for so long a period, exempted by beloved from much financial anxiety.

"The letter, announcing this failure of friendship and sympathy, arrived during Mr. Spurgeon's absence at Mentone, and it therefore came my duty to open and read it. Then followed one of those hallowed enlargements of heart which leave their mark for ever on the life of the person experiencing them. At once, I took the letter, and spread it before the Lord, pleading, as Hezekiah did, that He would 'hear and see' the words written therein; and He gave me so strong a confidence in His overruling and delivering power that, as I knelt in His presence, and told Him how completely I trusted Him on my husband's behalf, the words of petition ceased from my lips, and I absolutely laughed aloud, so little did I fear what man could do, and so blessedly reliant did He make me on His own love and omnipotence!

"In this exultant frame of mind, I wrote to Mentone, making light of the trouble, and endeavouring to parry the blow which I knew must sorely wound the sensitive heart of my beloved. ... So, as far as I was able, being absent from him, I comforted and upheld my much-tried spouse. In less time than I had thought possible, I received this telegram: 'I laugh with you. The Lord will not fail us, nor forsake us.' ...

"A lady from the Antipodes, who was staying in London, afterwards related that, during the time under consideration, she felt an overpowering impression that she must go to Mr. Spurgeon, in the South of France, and carry him some financial help to meet a special emergency. She said that, on other occasions, when similar intimations had come to her, she had obeyed her Lord's commands, and in each instance had found that she had been infallibly guided by Him, so she at once made arrangements for the thousand miles' journey. The amount she was to give was not at first revealed to her, nor did she know exactly where she was to go, and it had been announced that Mr. Spurgeon would be moving from place to place. However, the Lord, who had entrusted her with the commission, directed her to Mentone; and, on her arrival there, she was further guided to the Hotel Beau Rivage. What happened there, my beloved thus records:

"An awe is upon me as I write to you, for I feel the Lord to be so near. On Tuesday evening, there came to this hotel three ladies who asked if Mr. Spurgeon were here, and left cards. The next morning, they were at our family worship; and, today, Mrs. R---- gave me the enclosed letter, and cheque for 100 pounds! I told her of my trouble afterwards, I had not mentioned it before, and I read to her a few sentences of your letter. 'There,' she said, 'that is the Lord's reason for moving me to give it to you; let it go to make up the lack for the next six months.' I worshipped the Lord with a thrilling joy. ... It may be very childish of me, but I could not help sending you the very cheque and letter, that you may see with your eyes what the Lord sent me. How this lady came to know my

hotel, I cannot imagine, but Mr. Harrauld [Spurgeon's private secretary] says that He who sent her knew where I was.'"

Isn't that a delight! It is a powerful reminder that the Lord will not forsake His own, though all men might. "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me..." (2 Tim. 4:17).

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